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Central Intelligence Agency



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Directorate of Intelligence

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Security at Qadhafi's Residences

Summary

As the threats to Libyan leader Qadhafi and his regime have increased since the mid-1970s, so have security measures around his two personal residences. Qadhafi's principal residence is within the Azizia Barracks compound at Tripoli; his other residence, which probably serves as a retreat, is near Surt--his birthplace and the traditional seat of his tribe. The fortifications and extensive security measures at both residences are directed primarily at defending the regime against the type of heavy assault that might accompany a military coup. The defenses, which include some of the most modern weapons in the Libyan arsenal, are manned by elite security troops. Passive defenses at Qadhafi's residences include electronic monitoring devices around perimeter walls and bunkers for equipment and personnel. (S

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Information available as of 1 December 1984 was used in this report. (U)

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Introduction

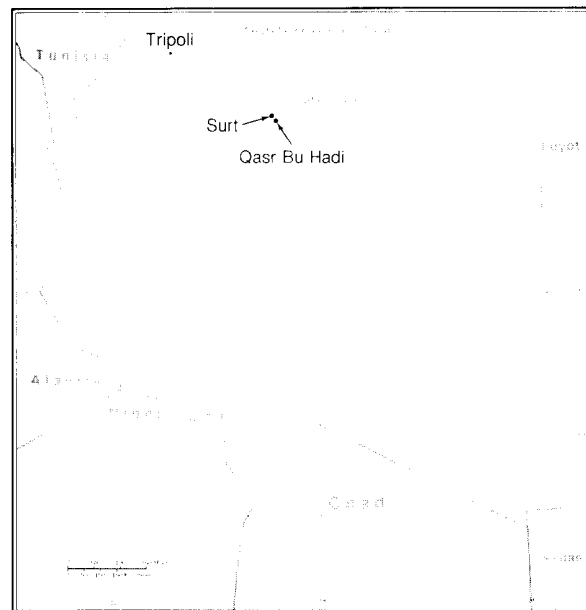
The primary reason Col. Muammar Qadhafi has been able to remain in power in Libya since 1969 is that he has been protected from assassination and coup attempts by an extensive and elaborate personal security apparatus. This security apparatus developed gradually as the frequency of assassination attempts and coup plots increased in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Today, personal security for Qadhafi is evident wherever he goes, and his two residences--one at Tripoli and one near Surt--are heavily secured and defended. The purported attack on Qadhafi's Tripoli compound in May 1984 by an antiregime dissident group focused the Intelligence Community's interest on his security apparatus and on the defenses around his residences. This study provides a detailed analysis--based on imagery in conjunction with other sources--of the facilities and security measures at these residences. (S)

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Discussion

Security measures at Libyan leader Qadhafi's two personal residences have increased dramatically since the mid-1970s. His principal residence is within the Azizia Barracks compound at Tripoli, and the other--which probably serves as a retreat--is at the village of Qasr Bu Hadi, near Surt (figure 1). The fortifications and extensive security measures at both residences are designed primarily to protect Qadhafi, his family, and his inner circle of confidants against the type of heavy assault that might be associated with a military coup. (S)

Figure 1
Location of Qadhafi's Residences



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Azizia Barracks

In August 1975 an extensive coup plot against Qadhafi by the military was discovered and was probably a major factor in the decision to build him a residence in a secure compound. Construction of the Azizia Barracks began in late 1975, and construction of Qadhafi's personal residence was started in early 1976 (figure 2). These facilities were externally complete by the end of 1978. (S [redacted])

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In addition to Qadhafi's personal residence the compound contains a Bedouin tent used by Qadhafi, a residence reportedly for his relatives, a headquarters building, a communications center, barracks for security troops, a dispensary, and equipment storage buildings. Figure 2 provides a detailed listing of facilities within the compound. Passive security measures at the compound include underground shelters for tanks, BMP infantry fighting vehicles, and multiple rocket launchers (MRLs); a bunker that, according to a US Army report, serves as a command post (figure 3); a probable bunker/bomb shelter under Qadhafi's residence (figure 4); a 5-meter-high masonry wall around the compound with machinegun ports along its entire length; fences within the compound that separate Qadhafi's residence from other areas; and, reportedly, remotely operated closed-circuit television cameras, electronic sensors, and searchlights. (S [redacted])

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The types of weapons--T-72 tanks, BMPs, BM-21 MRLs, SA-8 surface-to-air missiles (deployed in a separate compound to the south-east) (figure 5), and light antiaircraft guns--deployed at the Azizia compound could be used to repel a ground, air, or combined attack. Because of the extensive underground vehicle storage, the quantity of heavy weapons at Azizia is not known. In addition to the tanks and BMPs deployed and stored within the Azizia compound, T-72 tanks and probably BMPs assigned to the security forces are stored in arched-roof concrete shelters in a separate compound immediately to the southeast (figure 6). According to a Defense Intelligence Agency study, these weapons are manned by elite Jamahiriya Guard units, and Jamahiriya Guard troops housed within the compound perform other security duties as well. We were unable to estimate the number of security troops stationed at the compound. (S [redacted])

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Since the late 1970s, according to open sources, Qadhafi has used a Bedouin tent erected near his residence in the Azizia compound as a place to meet with visiting dignitaries and to hold press conferences (figure 7). The presence of a tent of this type and unusual security measures were the keys to identifying his residence near Surt. (S NF)

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Next 4 Page(s) In Document Denied

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Surt/Qasr Bu Hadi Installation

References have been made in both open and classified publications to the fact that Qadhafi occasionally retires to Surt--his birthplace and the seat of his tribe; however, we have had no description of his residence there or its exact location. He reportedly has withdrawn "to Surt" following major setbacks in his policies or after assassination attempts, and sometimes to meet with the leaders of his tribe. The importance of the Surt area to him is indicated by the fact that the largest ground forces installation and the largest operational airfield in the country were built near Surt. The Surt area is a relatively safe place for Qadhafi, because, there in his home territory, he is surrounded primarily by kinsmen who are loyal to him. (S [redacted])

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¹Qasr Bu Hadi, 19 kilometers south-southeast of Surt, holds special meaning for Qadhafi, his family, and tribe, because, according to open sources, his father was a hero in a crucial battle fought there against the Italians in 1915. It is likely that Qadhafi, who was born "in the Surt area," was born at or very near Qasr Bu Hadi. (U)

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Next 7 Page(s) In Document Denied